

WHY WAS THE TENNESSE SYNOD SO CONSERVATIVE?

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May 2, 1977

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 W. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

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"If the old ministers will not act agreeably to the Augsburg Confession, we will erect a synod in Tennessee."¹ With these words we see the beginning of a chain of events that are really unparalleled in Lutheran Church history. From perhaps the most liberal synod of its day grew a synod that was by far the most conservative of its day. Tennessee was so conservative that most other synods ignored them, and others, for a period at least, actively opposed them. The men in Tennessee in turn avoided compromising unions with everyone else for over 50 years.

The question that has crossed many people's minds is, "Why was Tennessee so conservative?" This question is all the more baffling when we see Philip Henkel voting for a thoroughly unionistic North Carolina Synod Constitution in 1817, and forming a Lutheran seminary with a Presbyterian in the same year. Moreover, Paul Henkel was known to consort with the German Reformed and the Moravians rather freely before the formation of the Tennessee Synod. What effected such a thorough and dramatic change of position?

In this paper I shall attempt to answer this question. However in doing so I wish to limit its scope to the beginning of the Tennessee Synod only. The fact that Tennessee stayed conservative for many years is a well known fact. The reasons why they stayed confessional are not all that hard to ascertain, but the explanation as to why they began so conservatively is not so readily apparent. It is this aspect of their history which I wish to explore.

In doing so two main thoughts will be developed. The first will be the evolution of the Henkel family, the second will be a description of the historical developments that led to the beginning of the Tennessee Synod.

The Early Henkels

The story of the Henkel family is one that is so fascinating, that I will spend considerable time developing it, giving special emphasis to Paul Henkel.

The first Henkel to reach America was Anthony Jacob, also known as Gerhardt. He came from a long line of Lutherans dating back to Dr. Johann Henkel of Reformation times. A. J.'s migration to America was not exactly planned. As a court preacher he quickly lost popularity by preaching against the loose morals of the court. It appears that A. J. would rather switch than fight so he chose to emigrate to America.² He arrived in 1717 as one of the first Lutheran pastors to set foot in the New World and settled in eastern Pennsylvania, working in the areas of New Hanover and Philadelphia.³

In 1750 Justus Henkel, who came from Germany with his father, moved to North Carolina. If you learn nothing else from this paper, here is one thing. In the family tree of the Henkel family, which you gave us in class, you listed Gerhardt as the son of A. J. Henkel. Gerhardt and A. J. are, in fact, one and the same person. Justus is A. J.'s son. This dual name for A. J. confused me also for a while. This tidbit of information has to be worth at least an A-alone.

Justus married there and had several sons who founded Rockingham and Pendleton Counties. A fierce combination of Indians, malaria and unfarmable land drove the Henkels and their relatives out of North Carolina in 1760. Justus settled in a valley of Northern Virginia which became known as Germany Valley. ^(Shenandoah Co. Valley) There they built Ft. Henkel for protection against the Indians. Jacob, the son of Justus and the father of Paul, moved to Hardy County, West Virginia, only a few miles away from his father, but separated by high mountains.⁴

The two sons of Jacob became famous pastors. Moses and his descendants labored for the Methodist Church. Paul and his brothers and their descendants belonged to the Lutheran Church.⁵ Paul Henkel was born on the Forks of the Yadkin River in Rowan County, North Carolina in 1754. Even as a boy he served as a scout in the war against the Catawba Indians there.⁶ While in North Carolina the Henkel families lived in forts and blockhouses guarding themselves against the Indians. They had to shoot straight and fast both at the Indians, and at whatever game they hurriedly tried to catch. As a result of all this, Paul was trained in and grew to love a backwoods life.⁷

John Schwarbach, a teacher and later a pastor, made extended missionary trips and would occasionally come to the Virginia homes of the Henkels where he liked to stay. Jacob and Justus loved their Bible and their book of sermons. So when Schwarbach, or any missionary for that matter, stayed there, they would talk about spiritual life as the children

4

sat and listened. The Henkels in that area organized a church, known appropriately as Henkels' Church, which lasted for some time. In 1768 Paul was confirmed by Schwarbach. This was the seed for Paul's later interest in the ministry.⁸

In 1776, of all times, Paul and his brother Moses turned to the ministry. Because Paul wanted a more thorough religious training he chose to stay with the Lutheran Church rather than joining his brother and the Methodists. Paul studied under a Rev. Krug of Frederickstown, Maryland where he learned, among other things, Latin and Greek.⁹

1782 marks the date of his first sermon in Northern Virginia. He began to roam through the country side to as far as Maryland. In the following year he covered the same territory to get letters of recommendation from the various congregations he visited. He received these plus a call from four congregations in the area of New Market, Virginia. He appeared before the Ministerium of Pennsylvania with these and was licensed to preach for one year on June 16, 1783. The license was renewed periodically until he was finally ordained by John Schmidt on June 6, 1792, in Philadelphia.¹⁰

He then moved into the Shenandoah Valley and devoted himself to the hard work of gathering the Lutherans scattered through the forests and mountains of Virginia and to serve them with the Sacraments. Next he moved to New Market in 1790, and while frequently relocating all over the East, this remained his base of operations for the rest of his life.¹¹

In 1785 he began his annual missionary treks to North Carolina, where he still had relatives, and to eastern Tennessee. When in Virginia he also made frequent trips to his old home in West Virginia to minister to his family and relatives there. From 1787 on his wife dumped the kids on their relatives and accompanied him wherever he went.¹²

In North Carolina the need for a pastor was so great that Henkel and family moved back to his place of birth^{in 1800}. While there he often visited the Moravian clergy, who even dedicated his newly built house. In 1801 he made another missionary tour in which he noted the disparaging conditions he met. Vigilante groups were not at all uncommon.¹³ In 1803 he was instrumental in founding the North Carolina Synod, on which we will comment later. Again the bad conditions and malaria forced the Henkels to move back to New Market in 1805.¹⁴

Beginning in 1806 Paul Henkel made extended missionary trips all over the place. He was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Ministerium which paid him \$40 per month. In 1806 he made a trip to southern Ohio in a two-wheeled cart, which he had to abandon at the mountains. On one journey he went up the Mad River in Ohio to the remotest white settlement there, 20 miles from the Indian frontier. In subsequent years he travelled as far as Kentucky and Indiana.¹⁵

Reading accounts of his journeys are highly interesting and informative. He usually sent messengers ahead to line up a place and a time for preaching and instruction. He tried to find friends wherever possible and it is amazing how many

he ran into. He conducted evening and prayer services frequently. Although he refrained from proselytizing, that did not stop him from preaching in a Presbyterian Church. In his sermons, which lasted well over an hour, he crammed in a whole instruction course, knowing he was seeing many there for the first and last time. He preached mostly in German and reluctantly in English. He often encountered resistance to infant Baptism, which prompted him to write a treatise on it in 1809. He had an aversion for the English speaking sects but willingly travelled with any German Reformed that he met on the way. Thus he made his way over countless miles until 1819.¹⁶

In 1804 Paul, along with his sons Ambrose and Solomon, established a printing press at New Market. Here he constructed a hand-press by hand which was in operation by 1806. This was the first German printing press in the South and served the Tennessee Synod well. In 1816 Paul began writing in earnest and produced hymnbooks, catechisms, homilies and even poetry in German and English. He was indeed a man of many talents.¹⁷

Henkel had an endless knack for being where the action was. In 1812 a special conference of the Pennsylvania Ministerium held its first conference west of the Alleghany Mountains. The next year Paul Henkel was there and was recognized as part of their body. In 1817 there was a movement to start a new Synod and Henkel was one of the three pastors there who participated in the Ohio Synod's formation. Two of his sons, Andrew and Philip, stayed with the Ohio Synod.¹⁸

In addition to the three synods mentioned above, and, of course, the Tennessee Synod, Henkel was instrumental in founding the Virginia Conference in 1793, which later became the Virginia Synod. In 1805 Solomon, his son, proposed that Articles 1-21 of the Augsburg Confession be added to the minutes. To this Paul appended an introduction. He became its president from 1806-1808, and in 1815.¹⁹

At this time we may pause to note some things about his appearance and life style. His son Andrew describes him as large for his time, 5'11½," black eyes, with a stocky build, yet athletic and quick.²⁰ It was evident that he was not greedy because he frequently declined calls that promised high and lucrative positions. When a parish was unable to pay him he supported himself by working as a cooper. He wore ordinary, homespun clothes, the only extravagance being a gown of the finest and heaviest black silk. He wore it whenever he conducted any act in connection with his calling. He began his sermons slowly with frequent blunders, but became more animated and eloquent as the sermon progressed.²¹

This brings us up to 1819 and the events that result in the split of 1820. For some unknown reason Paul Henkel did not come to the special meeting of the North Carolina Synod in April of 1819, even though he had promised to be there.²² Neither did he attend the meeting about 6 weeks later in which Philip and David played the prominent roles. In August of 1819 Paul came to Tennessee from Virginia and visited Philip to the end of September. Then he went to North Carolina to

see David and finally returned to New Market in December.²³ While at Philip's house he was already planning the formation of a new synod, this before the North Carolina Synod meeting of 1820.²⁴ At the meeting in 1820 the split occurred and Paul remained in Tennessee until the formation of the Tennessee Synod in July.²⁵

That Paul Henkel was instrumental in setting the direction of the Tennessee Synod is shown by his remarks concerning his meeting with Philip in 1819. "Today we took the initial steps towards forming a Conference in Tennessee." Two days later he wrote, "We continued and concluded the work of the Conference."²⁶ He and his sons, along with the others that met with them, merely put the plan into effect that had been worked up earlier.

The result was the adoption of a constitution, which was not ideal by our standards, but which was far better than anything that had existed up to that time. In it we read the following.

Article 2. All teachings relative to the faith, and all doctrines concerning Christian conduct, as well as all books publicly used in the Church in the service or worship of God, shall be arranged and kept, as nearly as it is possible to do, in accordance with the doctrines of the holy Scriptures and the Augsburg Confession. And especially shall the young, and others who need it, be instructed in Luther's Small Catechism...

Article 3. Whoever desires to be a teacher, shall also take a solemn obligation, that he will teach according to the Word of God and the Augsburg Confession and the doctrines of our Church. Nor can any teacher in our Conference be allowed to stand in connection with any organization in connection with the so-called Central or General Synod...

Article 13. None of the teachers of our Conference can take a seat and vote in the present Synod of the State of North Carolina, because we cannot regard it as a true Lutheran Synod.²⁷

Only eight years later we see a revised Constitution that is outstanding in its stand for confessional Lutheranism.

"Article 1. The Holy Scriptures, or the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments shall be the only rule of doctrine and church discipline." Article 2 accepts the 28 articles of the Augsburg Confession as well as Luther's Small Catechism with a "quia" subscription, the first Lutheran Synod in America ever to do this.²⁸

Why had the Henkels, and especially Paul, put such a heavy emphasis on the Augsburg Confession? Not only was this uncharacteristic of the rest of the Lutheran Synods of that time, but so also was their adoption of the unaltered version and the inclusion of all 28 articles instead of the customary 21 or 22.

This can be explained by following the development of Paul Henkel's confessional awareness. In general, we can say that Paul Henkel was more an itinerant missionary than a theologian. In his early ministry he treated the Augsburg Confession rather loosely. His son Andrew said that he favored some of the changes in the Augsburg Confession made by Melancthon.²⁹ But at least he operated on the basis of it. His fondness for it can be seen by the fact that when he became president of the North Carolina Synod in 1804, the Synod passed a resolution stipulating that its members act in accordance

with the Augsburg Confession.³⁰ That the members of the Synod regarded the Augsburg Confession rather loosely, is beyond dispute. But had it not been for Henkel it is doubtful that North Carolina would have adopted it until much later.

As time passed Henkel gradually changed. His association with the Lutheran ministers of Ohio and the Ohio Synod brought him into contact with more conservative men. In addition he studied Luther and slowly but surely became a zealous advocate of the unaltered Augsburg Confession.³¹ This is readily proved by the fact that appended to the end of the Tennessee Synod's proceedings of 1820 are the 28 articles of the ^{unaltered} Augsburg Confession.³²

One other thing to note in the Tennessee Synod's Constitution is the point made in Articles 3 and 13. Here the beginning of Scriptural fellowship practices is evidenced by Tennessee's refusal to be in fellowship with both the General Synod and North Carolina. Here also Paul Henkel as well as his son David deserve the credit. Again we see how Paul developed in this regard, although even after 1820, it is doubtful as to whether he was completely cured of all unionistic practices.

In his earlier years, as we have already mentioned, Henkel was not averse to working with others of a different faith. Literally everyone did it at that time. Some churches which he visited were owned jointly by the Lutheran and Reformed. He associated freely with Reformed pastors and worked side by side with the Moravians in North Carolina.

The one characteristic common to these two groups was that they both spoke German. Anyone who spoke German was alright in Paul's book. As late as 1819, when he attended a meeting of the Ohio Synod, Henkel seconded a resolution presented by a Reformed pastor for yearly fraternal meetings.³³ It is well known that he was a staunch advocate of the German language. The very first article of the Tennessee Synod's Constitution in 1820 states that all business and work should be conducted in the German language.³⁴

Fortunately, Shober soured the Henkels on the Moravians and the German Reformed all but disappeared from the area, thereby removing the temptation to fraternize with them. Thus, they reached good fellowship principles on one hand by means of the back door.

But the main reason for Paul Henkel's opposition to the General Synod centers around the Augsburg Confession. It was obvious to Paul Henkel that the proposed General Synod would not adopt the Augsburg Confession in any form. The result was a fear of the prospect of a future union involving the General Synod with non-Lutherans. This fear was well founded not only because of Shober's unionism, but due to conditions within the Pennsylvania Synod itself.

The result was that Paul Henkel opposed the General Synod with a passion. He did so at the North Carolina Synod meeting which was one of the reasons for the split.³⁵ He also solidified the Ohio Synod's stand against the General Synod by a letter written in 1825 in which he stated, "immer der alten

Evangelischen Ordnung treu bleiben."³⁶ His lasting influence also played a key role in the Virginia Synod's dropping out of the General Synod in 1829, though they rejoined in 1839.³⁷

Thus we see why the articles opposing the General and North Carolina Synods appear in the Tennessee Constitution of 1820. To be sure, some of this opposition was reactionary, but by and large it was founded on Scriptural principles. In later years these were developed and uniformly applied to all church bodies, the German Reformed included.

The Other Henkels

We shall look briefly at two sons of Paul, Philip and David. It can be safely said that the Tennessee Synod was confessional in spite of Philip Henkel. In 1804 he presented this resolution to the North Carolina Synod,

Inasmuch as awakenings arise in our day by means of 3 days' preaching and the like is to be wished among our brethren in the faith, a trial of such preaching be made with the proviso that three ministers of our connection hold these meetings to which also ministers of the Moravian and Reformed Churches, whether German or English, be welcomed. At each of these meetings communion is to be administered.³⁸

Furthermore, a Presbyterian pastor helped him distribute communion and he was a member of the committee that approved Shober's unionistic book in the North Carolina Synod meeting of 1818.³⁹ He certainly was instrumental in the split from North Carolina, but he contributed little to Tennessee's conservatism.

On the other hand there is David Henkel. He was clearly the most prominent influence in Tennessee's confessional development from its inception to his death. It was largely due to him that the 1828 Constitution read the way it did. He was the dogmatician of the Henkels and wrote lengthy treatises on doctrinal subjects, all plainly Lutheran in character.

The role of David Henkel in the development of Tennessee's initial position is hard to say. He doubtless had some input but exactly what he contributed is unclear. At any rate, he was an extremely gifted man.

He, of course, studied under his father for much of the time and in his middle teens he worked under a Rev. G. Dreher of South Carolina for one year.⁴⁰ In 1813 he was licensed by the North Carolina Synod as a catechist and succeeded his brother Philip in Lincoln County, North Carolina. The Synod advanced him to a licensed candidate for ordination in 1815. In 1816 his congregations asked for his ordination but, for reasons we will speak of shortly, he was denied it.⁴¹ He was consistently denied ordination until Philip Henkel took upon himself to ordain him at the "Timely Synod" of 1819.

The reason for the denial of his ordination centered around various charges that were made about him. It really boiled down to an excessive championship of Lutheran doctrine, or so it seemed to the ministers in North Carolina.⁴² All these events will be discussed more fully later. The point we wish to make here is that David Henkel clearly stood for orthodox Lutheranism to the point of alienating even the

German Reformed.⁴³ He apparently did not inherit the problems that his father had in this respect. David was the most Lutheran of all the Henkels.

Brief History of North Carolina to About 1815

In probing the questions as to why Tennessee began so conservatively we will also have to trace the historical development of the North Carolina Synod. It is not my intention to go into detail about these early years of the Synod. We will make a detailed examination of the split. Here a brief sketch is all that is necessary.

Germans first began moving into North Carolina around 1750. Justus and Jacob Henkel must have been among them. They left Pennsylvania in search of new, easy-to-get farm lands. News of the success of at least some of the farmers reached Pennsylvania and attracted more settlers. True to the German life style, they avoided towns and stayed mainly in the rural areas, which at that time, were unexplored and harsh wilderness.⁴⁴

No Lutheran pastor came to North Carolina for over 20 years. It was far from Shangrila. In the early 1770's the people became desperate and sent a delegation to Hanover, Germany to sucker a pastor into coming over. They were rewarded with Adolphus Nussman who arrived in 1773. Along with Nussman came a teacher named Arends who was ordained two years later. In 1788 a man arrived who would later be involved with the Henkel split, Carl Storch. Storch came from the Helmstaedt Mission Society and worked until he died in 1831. Besides

these, Christian Bernhardt arrived from Stuttgart in 1787 and Arnold Roschen came from Bremen in 1789. Both of these men left North Carolina in 1800 to go elsewhere.⁴⁵ In 1785 Paul Henkel began to visit North Carolina and moved down for 5 years in 1800.

One man that deserves some attention is Robert Miller. Originally from Scotland he joined the Methodist Church in 1784 and was licensed to preach. Finding that there were few Methodists in North Carolina, he joined the Episcopal Church. But there were not many of them either so he came to the Lutherans for ordination. In 1794 Nussman, Arends, Storch, Roschen and Bernhardt gathered to examine and ordain Miller. This was done with the understanding that he was always to be obedient to the laws of the Episcopal Church.⁴⁶ Miller worked with the Lutherans in North Carolina until 1821 when he left to join the Episcopal Church. In that same year through his efforts, fellowship was declared between the Episcopal Church and the North Carolina Synod. However, this lasted only two years.⁴⁷ It goes without saying that Miller had no positive Lutheran influence on the North Carolina Synod.

As bad as Miller was, there was someone worse. Gottlieb Shober, a Moravian, joined the Lutheran Church and was ordained in 1810. Of him Bernheim states,

Rev. Shober was no Lutheran, he was a member of the Moravian Church, and never disconnected himself from communion with the same; he lived and died a member of that Church. This information the writer received from his own daughter.⁴⁸

Shober was a thorough ecumenicist. He published a hymnal for the Lutheran and Reformed "to pave the way to universal harmony, union and love among our Lutheran and Reformed Churches."⁴⁹

His most notorious achievement is a work that is popularly referred to as "Luther" because its title is a mile long. In 1816 at the North Carolina Synod meeting, Philip Henkel introduced a resolution to print out the accounts and regulations of the Synod in English. Since Shober was the secretary he was the logical choice to do the work.⁵⁰ The next year Shober returned with a monstrous work which included, among other things, a history of the Reformation, an analysis of Luther's doctrine and character, the Constitution of the Synod, and a translation of the first 22 articles of the Augsburg Confession with frequent alterations and omissions.⁵¹ Philip Henkel, Miller and another man examined and approved Shober's work, which was then adopted by the Synod.

To show the thinking of Shober we quote from the conclusion of "Luther"

I have attentively examined the doctrine of the Episcopalian Church, read many excellent authors of the Presbyterians, know the Methodist doctrine from their book, 'Portraiture of Methodism,' and am acquainted with the Baptist doctrine, so far as that they admit and adore Jesus the Savior. Among all those classes who worship Jesus as a God, I see nothing of importance to prevent a cordial union; and how happy would it be if all the Churches could unit, and send deputies to a general meeting of all denominations...⁵²

You have to wonder why he stopped with Baptists. Surely there were one or two ^{more} church bodies around that could be included.

Turning now to the spiritual conditions of that time, we find chaos in the South. After the Revolutionary War religious conditions worsened considerably. Liberty from England was also carried into religion with the result that people ignored everything that was fixed or established.⁵³ Hanover ceased sending missionaries over and rationalism set in.

Revivalism set in as a reaction in the early 1800's. The German ministers were at a loss as to what to make of it. Storch sent to Germany for an opinion.⁵⁴ The people were troubled by what they saw and asked their pastors for help. In the mean time it diverted attention from the regular Means of Grace as well as from the promises of the Word.⁵⁵

The North Carolina Synod was formed in self defense with Paul Henkel leading the way. In speaking about revivalism Henkel says,

The German ministers were at first divided in their opinions on this subject; nevertheless it drove them to more intimate communion with each other in their official acts, and they had this opportunity to investigate the matter more closely. The Lutheran pastors (of North Carolina) formed themselves into a Conference (Synod).⁵⁶

Conditions in North Carolina in the 1800's were a shambles. We may shake our heads at the liberalness of the North Carolina Synod but they did well just to stay in existence in those early years. The people were surrounded by fanatical sects, there were few ministers of their own faith, some churches didn't see any pastor at all for years. The result was that the confessional consciousness became blurred and confused, and, in some cases, was barely recognizable.⁵⁷

Bernheim and Cox, who are pro North Carolina all the way, like to paint a rosy picture of how the Synod dragged itself out of the depths in 1803 to something that was not all that bad in 1818.⁵⁸ Fox paints a more realistic picture of the pastors in North Carolina, noting that with the exception of Paul Henkel, they all were thoroughly liberal.⁵⁹

Formation of the Tennessee Synod

We may begin by saying that opinions as to the cause of the split are varied. Bernheim and Cox in their history of the North Carolina Synod, attribute the break to personal differences.⁶⁰ Socrates Henkel, the historian for the Tennessee Synod, claims that doctrinal differences alone were responsible for the division.⁶¹ Both are prejudiced. The truth lies somewhere in that elusive middle ground. By piecing together five or six accounts of the events of 1817-1820, we shall try to determine what actually did happen.

One of the major reasons for the big rhubarbs of 1819 and 1820 was David Henkel. There was little doubt that he was intelligent, gifted and outspoken. This last characteristic led to problems and plunged the Synod into turmoil. This is evident by the events that led up to the split.

In 1815 David was licensed by North Carolina for one year. One year later his congregations asked that he be ordained. But this was not to take place. David made it known that he did not like the licensure system and thought it should be abandoned altogether. In this he was supported by Storch,

the Synod president. Shober, however, opposed them and won. Since the Synod wanted to settle the matter, David's ordination had to wait.⁶²

In 1817 David appeared again with the same request from his congregations. The Synod gave the excuse that they still had not finished discussing the licensure system and so he would have to wait. However, Daniel Moser, who was licensed in 1815 along with David, was ordained while David was not. The young Henkel felt that this was due to Shober with whom he had battled a year earlier. In this he was probably correct. In a book called "Review" Shober revealed that he was collecting evidence against Henkel already in 1818. How could he return to his congregation? They would think him to be inferior for not being ordained. Knowing Shober's unionistic position, he began to push Lutheran orthodoxy in retaliation.⁶³

For reasons which we will see later, no Synod meeting was held in 1818 and the meeting of 1819 was moved up to the end of April. Even though David Henkel considered this an irregularity, he knew of Shober's schemes and realized that if he did not attend the meeting, he would certainly be ruined as a pastor. So he went.⁶⁴

When he arrived he was put on trial for perjury and false doctrine. His accusers were Andrew Hoyle, and other German Presbyterian ministers. Shober was the prosecuting attorney. The Presbyterians were disturbed by Henkel's excessive championship of Lutheran doctrine and claimed that he split their community as well as offending the Reformed clergy.⁶⁵ Specifically

he was charged with perjury, atrocious doctrines of Baptismal regeneration, the omnipresence of Christ's humanity, and transubstantiation.⁶⁶

The perjury charge was dropped so the trial centered on David Henkel's alleged heresies. Henkel pleaded not guilty and denied that he had ever preached the things of which he was accused. Nevertheless, some of the charges were supposedly proven to be true while others were not. Henkel was reduced to a catechist for six months and then if peace was restored, he would again be licensed. David Henkel accepted this action and promised to do better.⁶⁷

I did not have a chance to thoroughly review David Henkel's treatises on Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but from what I read Henkel is clearly orthodox. Other conservative men such as Bente and Cox also agree in their critiques of Henkel's writings. It appears as if Henkel was railroaded at the 1819 meeting. However, Henkel did contribute to his own problems by his blustering attacks on others. The fact that Shober allowed Presbyterians, of all people, to press doctrinal charges against Henkel at a Lutheran Synod meeting was a sign of the liberalness of the times.

In spite of what David said at the convention, he evidently was not satisfied with what went on because he asked the opinion of three different judges as to the constitutionality of the Synod meeting.⁶⁸ On their opinion he declared the meeting unconstitutional because it was moved up six weeks. Here we shall leave the story of David Henkel's woes and review the

reasons as to why Henkel objected to the change in dates for the 1819 meeting.

There had been previous communications between the Pennsylvania and North Carolina Synods before 1818, but this was the first that looked like it would amount to anything. Pennsylvania was thinking of uniting the various Lutheran Synods together into one large Synod. This was right up Shoher's alley and he persuaded Storch and other pastors and laymen to move the meeting ahead several weeks so that North Carolina could send a delegate to the 1819 meeting in Pennsylvania.⁶⁹

This was done in spite of what happened in 1817. At that time it was decided that Synod meetings should be moved from the Fall to Trinity Sunday because many became sick in Fall. Shoher himself was responsible for this change. This time was firmly fixed as even Bernheim himself testifies.⁷⁰ Technically, therefore, the early Synod meeting of 1819 violated the Constitution of the North Carolina Synod.

In addition, Socrates Henkel stated that some ministers were too far away to attend on such short notice and claimed that others never heard of the meeting.⁷¹ This cannot be proved. Paul Henkel certainly heard of it because the minutes of the 1819 meeting mentioned that he promised to come but did not.⁷² Moreover, Philip Henkel sent a letter to the Synod meeting which was viewed as an attempt to dictate to the meeting.⁷³ Evidently his letter protested the meeting and contained some threats. Some who stayed away from the meeting were apparently persuaded by Philip not to go.⁷⁴ It seems probable, then, that both Philip and Paul could have made it to the meeting.

When the Synod convened in April 6 out of the 8 pastors were present, Paul and Philip Henkel being absent. Along with the pastors a majority of the other delegates were in attendance. Bernheim and Cox state that the Synod was legal for two reasons: first, because they had obtained consent from a majority of the members previous to the meeting, and secondly, the meeting itself sanctioned themselves as the Synod meeting.⁷⁵

The Synod probably had the right to do what they did, but as Bernheim points out in his earlier history of North Carolina, they were not very wise in doing so. The question concerning the General Synod did not require speedy action because the meeting in Baltimore was only an annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Synod. They only discussed the propriety of organizing a General Synod. In fact, Shober was the only pastor at that meeting from another Lutheran body. It really was injudicious of Shober and the Synod to create such a disturbance at home for the meeting in Pennsylvania.⁷⁶

On Trinity Sunday in 1819 Philip and David Henkel, Joseph Bell, and a number of delegates assembled and declared themselves to be the Synod of North Carolina. Storch, on persuasion, opened a church building to Henkels and company but for preaching and nothing else. Outside the church Philip Henkel ordained Bell and David Henkel.⁷⁷ Apparently David felt that he had been cheated out of ordination long enough, and rightly so. But this really was out of order as Bernheim and Cox point out. First of all David was on probation and it really was in defiance of all law and order.⁷⁸ For some reason or other

Paul Henkel was not in attendance at the "Timely Synod," as it later was called.

Here we will make a small digression to note something of interest. In 1817 Philip Henkel and Joseph Bell, a Methodist, opened a seminary in Greene County, Tennessee. The courses included Greek, Latin, German, English and theology. What passed for theology is anyone's guess.⁷⁹ The school only lasted for two years for three main reasons. First, opening a seminary in eastern Tennessee was like opening a taco stand in the Sahara, hardly anyone came. Secondly, although the North Carolina Synod leaders appropriated some money for the school, they did not really push it. Finally, and most importantly, the division of 1820 brought it to an end.⁸⁰

This brings us to the "Quarrelling Synod" of 1820. It is difficult to try to integrate the various accounts into proper sequence but we shall try. The meeting took place at one of David Henkel's congregations. Shober mistakenly thought that the congregation was split in its support of Henkel. When the Synod began he found unified support for Henkel. At this meeting all the pastors were there as well as many of the delegates.

It appears that the men were divided into two groups outside of the church before the synod began. Someone, presumably Shober, strode up to the Henkels and put two questions to them: 1) Will you withdraw from the Synod? and 2) Will you submit to the decision of the majority of the ministers and the lay-delegates, relative to the controversies and differences? The answer they received was this, "We will not

withdraw from the Synod, nor will we be ruled by a majority, but are ready and willing to investigate and decide everything according to the teachings of the Augsburg Confession and the Constitution of the Synod, but not otherwise."⁸¹ Notice^{that} the stand for the Augsburg Confession had gelled by this time.

After some further sparring the contestants moved into the church where the main bout began. First the legitimacy of the 1819 meeting was called into question. Shober and Storch claimed that there were no rules by which they were bound. Shober's book, "Luther," which carried the stipulation that the Synod should meet only on Trinity Sunday, was only supposed to be a model.

The Henkels retaliated with two points: 1) The Synod did have a Constitution which was illegally violated, and 2) The decision to accept the Pennsylvania Ministerium's invitation to form a general synod involved a violation of the Confession of the Church because the formation of such a synod would seek a union with all religious denominations. The fact that a majority favored it was no excuse. Not very much is reported about discussion on the Henkel's second point. Shober and Storch apparently wanted to argue only the first. They still maintained that they had no constitution, though later in a footnote it was acknowledged that there was. Out of this confrontation nothing much resulted and the two parties adjourned for the morning.⁸²

In the afternoon the Tennessee men took the lead in accusing the North Carolina side of not teaching Baptism to be regeneration,

of avoiding the Real Presence, and of favoring entry into the General Synod which was against the Augsburg Confession.

Paul concluded by saying of the North Carolina Synod, "I cannot unite with such a body."⁸³

Realizing that the Henkels had the solid backing of David's congregation, the North Carolina men were put on the spot. Suddenly someone stood up and shouted, "Whoever is a right Lutheran, let him follow us out to John Harry's hotel, there we will begin our Synod." The reply came back, "Whoever is a Schwärmer let him follow." Thus the split was complete.⁸⁴

After the Synod bitter feelings prevailed. On June 13, Paul wrote a letter to his son Solomon two weeks after the split and one month before the formation of the Tennessee Synod. It was sarcastic and reflected the bitterness of Paul. He was, no doubt, disturbed to see his old Synod go down the drain. What he perhaps did not realize is that he changed more than the Synod. Also in the letter he outlined the position that the new Synod would take. This shows that Paul did indeed influence Tennessee's position considerably.

On July 17, 1820, the Tennessee Synod was formed. We have already looked at its doctrinal position above so we do not need to mention it again.

At this point it might be well to examine the causes of this rupture in the North Carolina Synod. Bernheim and Cox attribute it solely to the obnoxious behavior of David Henkel. They note that the minutes of the meeting made no mention of the General Synod or doctrinal differences, only the squabble over David Henkel.⁸⁵

This is a gross oversimplification. The reason that no comments of a doctrinal nature appear is because Shober was the secretary. His concerns centered not on doctrine but on his dislike of David Henkel. He reported accordingly.

He was, however, a reason for the split. In the morning session of the 1820 meeting, David's ordination was hotly contested. The North Carolina people claimed that they had enough to convict him of the charges that were made about him. The Henkels maintained that there was not nearly enough evidence and that he was tried unfairly.⁸⁶ Neither side would give in and animosity increased.

Socrates Henkel attributes the break solely to doctrinal reasons.⁸⁷ This is not entirely true as we have just seen above. However this too was a reason for the final break. This is readily proved by the charges of doctrinal aberration made by Tennessee in the afternoon session. David Henkel, no doubt, was central in developing these since he was accused of erring in these same issues only one year before in the meeting of 1819. Now the tables were turned and David could do the accusing.

Finally we note that the Henkels' opposition to the General Synod also played a role in their split from North Carolina. It is mentioned for the first time in the afternoon session of the 1820 Synod meeting, but was no doubt prominent before this. In their minutes of the initial meeting of the Tennessee Synod they printed the entire plan of the General Synod, accompanied with objections to, and criticisms on, every article.⁸⁸

This proposed plan or "Plan Entwurf," as it was customarily called was primarily Shober's brainchild. It had been submitted by him at the meeting of the Pennsylvania Synod in 1819. After some revisions by a committee, it was accepted and sent out to all the synods for study and comment. Shober's connection with the plan made the project anathema to the Henkels way before the Synod meeting of 1820. They opposed it everywhere, as mentioned earlier.⁸⁹ They also voiced their concern at the Synod meeting of 1820 which was the last thing that was debated before the split.

These three things, therefore, contributed to Tennessee's break with North Carolina. As to what percentage each reason played, it is hard to say. All three were, however, present in one manner or another and all contributed to the split.

Summary

Now we are ready to take up the question, "Why was the Tennessee Synod so conservative?" We may break the reasons down into two main categories: 1) their stand for the Confessions, particularly the Augsburg Confession, and 2) a reactionary opposition against Shober and the North Carolina Synod.

We have already noted Paul Henkel's progress to conservatism. Slowly but surely he saw that the unaltered Augsburg Confession was correct in its explanation of Scripture. This was accomplished primarily, so his son Andrew states, by studying Luther. As he realized the worth of the unaltered

Augsburg Confession he also had to notice how those about him deviated considerably from it. The events of 1819 and 1820 forced him to solidify his position on the Augsburg Confession. This enthusiasm for the Augsburg Confession was no doubt passed on to the other Henkels and members of the Tennessee Synod. The result is evident in the Tennessee Synod's Constitution of 1820, a clear stand for Confessional Lutheranism.

The second reason for their conservative stance, I believe, is their reaction against the North Carolina Synod, and especially Shober. There is no doubt that David Henkel was the most orthodox of all the Henkels. Yet it seems as if he did not really start voicing his Lutheranism fully until Shober goaded him into it. Knowing that Shober was a unionist seemed to solidify Henkel's opposition to union with any non-Lutherans. On one occasion he is supposed to have remarked that marriage between Lutherans and Reformed was like mating cows with horses.⁹⁰ Would he have taken so strong a stand against ecumenicism if it had not been for Shober? I doubt it.

This opposition to Shober spread to the rest of the Henkels after David's humiliation of 1819. It manifested itself in their united stand against the General Synod and its "Plan Entwurf." Some of this was, of course, due to their realization of the fact that this conflicted with the Augsburg Confession. But it is unlikely that they would have been so rabid in their denunciation of the General Synod had Shober not been connected with it. Their animosity towards Shober moved them, at least in part, to look for something with which to

oppose him and the General Synod. The answer was obvious, the Augsburg Confession.

To what extent one cause held prominence over the other in determining Tennessee's conservative position is impossible to determine. To do that it would have been necessary to be present. But that both were instrumental in determining Tennessee's confessional stance is the contention of this paper.

Thus the events leading up to 1820 produced not just another synod, but the first real conservative Lutheran synod in America. As such the men of Tennessee anchored themselves to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions as correct expositions of them. It was the only Lutheran Synod in existence in America at that time that accepted the Augsburg Confession with no reservations. Not only were they orthodox on paper, but they also put their words into practice. Thus, they became the first real voice that called on Lutherans to return to the fundamentals of their church, a voice which they later lost, but which by God's grace, others have picked up.

End Notes

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³C. W. Cassell, W. J. Finck, and Elon O. Henkel, The Lutheran Church in Virginia and East Tennessee (Strasburg: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1930), p. 37.

⁴Ibid., pp. 12-3.

⁵Ibid., p. 13.

⁶Cassell, Finck and Henkel, op. cit., p. 58.

⁷Andrew Henkel, Biography of Paul Henkel, appended to Rev. Paul Henkel's Journal, "Ohio Archival and Historical Society Publications," ed. Clement L. Martzloff, trans. Rev. F. E. Cooper (Athens: Ohio University, 1914), pp. 205-6.

⁸Cassell, Finck and Henkel, op. cit., pp. 41-2.

⁹Andrew Henkel, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁰Cassell, Finck and Henkel, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 50-4.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Paul Henkel, "Diary of Paul Henkel," trans. Theodore Graebner, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, I (April, 1928), pp. 16-20.

¹⁴Andrew Henkel, op. cit., pp. 206-7.

¹⁵Theodore Graebner, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

¹⁶Paul Henkel, Rev. Paul Henkel's Journal, op. cit., pp. 164-198.

¹⁷Theodore Graebner, op. cit., pp. 61-2.

¹⁸Andrew Henkel, op. cit., p. 207.

¹⁹Cassell, Finck and Henkel, op. cit., pp. 82-97.

²⁰Andrew Henkel, op. cit., p. 208.

- ²¹Theodore Graebner, op. cit., p. 63.
- ²²Minutes of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North Carolina, from 1803-1826, trans. F. W. E. Peschau (Newberry: Aull and Houseal, 1894), p. 35.
- ²³Harry G. Coiner, "Letters to the Editor about David Henkel," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII (February, 1970), p.12.
- ²⁴Richard H. Baur, "Birth of the Tennessee Synod," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLVI (Winter, 1973), p. 169.
- ²⁵Harry G. Coiner, op. cit., p. 13.
- ²⁶Richard H. Baur, op. cit., p. 169.
- ²⁷Socrates Henkel, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod (New Market: Henkel & Co., Printers and Publishers, 1890), pp. 25-9.
- ²⁸The Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod of 1928 (Salem: Blum & Son, 1838), pp. 4-5.
- ²⁹Andrew Henkel, op. cit., p. 207.
- ³⁰North Carolina Synod, Minutes, p. 3.
- ³¹Andrew Henkel, op. cit., p. 207.
- ³²Socrates Henkel, op. cit., p. 30.
- ³³Ibid., p. 25.
- ³⁴B. H. Pershing, "Paul Henkel: Frontier Missionary, Organizer and Author," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, VII (January, 1935), p. 110.
- ³⁵Richard H. Baur, op. cit., p. 174.
- ³⁶B. H. Pershing, op. cit., p. 110.
- ³⁷Cassell, Finck and Menkel, op. cit., p. 97.
- ³⁸Luther A. Fox, "The Genesis of the Tennessee Synod," The Lutheran Quarterly, LII (January, 1922), p. 90.
- ³⁹North Carolina Synod, Minutes, p. 32.
- ⁴⁰Harry G. Coiner, op. cit., p. 12.
- ⁴¹Luther A. Fox, op. cit., p. 93.
- ⁴²Harry G. Coiner, op. cit., p. 12.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴G.D. Bernheim and G. H. Cox, The History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Ministerium of North Carolina (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1902), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 11-20.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 20-6.

⁴⁷Socrates Henkel, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

⁴⁸G D. Bernheim, History of the German Settlements and of the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina (Baltimore: Reginal Publication Co., 1975, orig. pub. in Philadelphia, 1872), p. 442.

⁴⁹Socrates Henkel, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

⁵⁰Bernheim and Cox, op. cit., p. 50.

⁵¹Socrates Henkel, op. cit., P. 11.

⁵²G. D. Bernheim, op. cit., pp. 433-4.

⁵³Socrates Henkel, op. cit., p. 34.

⁵⁴G. D. Bernheim, op. cit., p. 352.

⁵⁵Socrates Henkel, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵⁶G. D. Bernheim, op. cit., pp. 352-3.

⁵⁷Bernheim and Cox, op. cit., p. 27.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp.29-30.

⁵⁹Luther A. Fox, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

⁶⁰Bernheim and Cox, op. cit., p. 43.

⁶¹Socrates Henkel, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶²Luther A. Fox, op. cit., pp. 93-4.

⁶³Ibid., p. 94.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Harry G. Coiner, op. cit., p. 12.

⁶⁶Luther A. Fox, op. cit., p. 95.

- 67 Bernheim and Cox, op. cit., p. 45.
- 68 Luther A. Fox, op.cit., p. 93.
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- 70 G. D. Bernheim, op. cit., p. 435.
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- 82 Richard H. Baur, op. cit., p. 171.
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